



Forming habits of healthy eating

Physicians concerned that their young patients are not eating a balanced diet (as many are not) now can recommend an interactive website to parents (www.5to10aday.com). The Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada are collaborating in the “5 to 10 a day” campaign, designed to encourage Canadians to consume five to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit daily.

All parents face the challenge of getting children to eat well. “Poor eating habits adopted early in life can lead to children developing risk factors for heart disease, including obesity, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol,” says Liz Pearson, dietitian and spokesperson for the 5 to 10 a day campaign. Tips on how to include vegetables and fruit in children’s snacks and meals are posted on the website.

1. Make mealtime a happy time. Once food is served, sit back and relax. Let your children decide what and how much they eat with no pushing to “clean your plate.”
2. Monkey see, monkey do: Be a great role model and be sure to eat a variety of vegetables and fruit every day.
3. Eat with your children. If you sit with them, they are more likely to eat, even if you are not eating.



Resources ❖ Ressources

.....

4. Try and try again. Many children must be exposed to (and ideally taste) a new food five to 10 times before accepting it.
5. Taste rules. Children eat food because it tastes good, not because it is good for them.
6. Keep it small. Serve about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of what you would serve yourself, and let your children ask for more. Serve just a teaspoon or two of a new food to make the food seem less intimidating.
7. Variety is good. A small serving of peas, a small serving of corn, and a small potato are more appetizing to children than a large serving of just one vegetable.
8. No bribes: When you offer children rewards for eating certain foods, the food eaten to obtain the reward becomes less preferred. Children start to think of these foods as “bad” foods or a form of punishment and resist eating them the next time they are offered.
9. Get dips. Most children will eat almost anything if there is a dip or sauce to go with it. Serve baby carrots or red pepper sticks with salad dressing. Allow children to dip cooked vegetables in plum sauce, applesauce, or ketchup. Serve fruit like strawberries, apple, or banana slices with fruit-flavoured yogurt, cream cheese, or chocolate pudding.
10. Make it easy, fun, and readily available. Serve vegetables and fruit chopped or sliced whenever possible. Always keep a fruit bowl in sight and in reach. Most important, eliminate the competition. If cupboards are filled with cookies and potato chips, vegetables and fruit are more likely to go untouched.
11. Do not cook. Most children prefer raw carrots to cooked carrots. While it is a good idea to get children accustomed to eating vegetables served in a variety of ways, serving them raw is a good strategy for success.
12. Hit hunger times. Make it a habit to offer your children vegetables and fruit when they are most hungry. Many parents offer vegetables only at suppertime, when many young children are more tired than hungry. ❖

BONUS TIP: Sneak it in. You can use the blender or food processor to hide vegetables in foods children love like spaghetti sauce, chili, or shepherd's pie. Shredded carrots mix nicely into tuna or chicken salad sandwich mixtures. Muffin mixes and pancake batters hide pureed fruit or shredded veggies.